

Tradition



Written
by A. Foster

The little church at the corner of 5th and Main was empty, all except for old Tom McGuire that is. He was a thin, slightly balding, lonely man whose job it was to care take the place. There had been a huge gathering for the evening prayer earlier that evening. The songs had been beautiful, but a little flat somehow to Tom's ear. It was not the singers he knew, but his own mood this time of year that took the magic from the notes. The pastor and his wife were gone now, to dinner over at the Smiths'. They had even asked him to come along, but he had declined. Tom liked the young preacher and his wife just fine. He even liked the Smiths'. They had been coming to this church for many years. Tom just could not bare going anywhere at the moment. His heart was just too heavy.

It was ten years ago tomorrow that his wife had passed away. She had died in a bad car wreck just outside of town. Christmas did not have the same meaning since then. Well, at least not like it had once. It used to be full of family and tradition, now it was just commercialism. Tom sat down heavily on the third pew, right side. His hand strayed to the seat next to him and a tear traced its way down his cheek. "I should have gone with you that night Jane. You asked me to take you to Lindy's and I just couldn't go. Now I can not seem to remember why exactly." Lindy had been their only daughter. She had left them when she was nineteen. Ran off and got married too early to that city guy, Jack Mayer. He had taken her with him to that big city he was from. Taken her away from her home and more importantly, he had taken her away from her family. Tom's face flushed a bit with

anger, too long held in check. He stood up too quick and felt just a little dizzy too.

Tom soon caught his breath and the room stopped moving and settled down again. He grumbled a little but began cleaning again. He straightened the hymn books and picked up the stray papers and cards on the seats and a few that had dropped to the floor. He finally reached the back of the church, the last pew. There, he reached down to pick up a tattered old bible someone had left behind and it flipped open in his hand. Scribbled on the inside cover was "Lindy Anne McGuire". Tom's heart skipped a beat. How did this get here? His knees became very weak and he found he had to sit down quickly or fall to the floor. Had she been here? Had she been in the congregation for prayer earlier that evening? He thumbed a bit further through the worn pages and found an unopened letter carefully preserved. It was addressed to him. The postmark was a little less than ten years ago and there was a huge red slash across the address with a message printed clearly, "Return to Sender". It was in his, own handwriting. Tears welled up inside that would not be held back a moment longer. He found his hands shaking so badly he could barely open the envelope. Tom did not know why, but he needed to read the contents that he had refused to look at so long ago. Through nearly blinded vision he read:

Dearest Mom and Dad,

I had hoped and prayed that you would come to our home for Christmas this year. I had the best news for you. I am having a baby. There have been so many times I have looked out my window and thought I had heard your truck drive up, but you were not there. I miss you both so very much. I know I have let you down somehow, by leaving. My dreams were different than those you had for me, but know one thing. I am happy. Dad, Jack is a good man and he is as good to me as you are too mom.

I have lost many things since I have moved to the big city. I miss them all. But each Christmas, I light the candle in the window that will always bring family home. I pray it will bring both to our home one day. The candle in my heart has remained lit through the year, every year in hopes to bring you back into our lives. Dad, I continue to keep all the traditions of our family and will give those precious gifts to our child too.

Thank you. Love you both with all my heart!

Lindy

Tom carefully folded the letter back and placed it into the envelope. Lindy, had not forgotten the candle? He himself, had not lit one since Margarita passed away. He had told Lindy the story of the woodcutter lost in the woods when she was very little. It was a folktale. The story went that the woodcutter had left his family one dark night and not returned. He had gone out in a great storm three days before Christmas to get food for them so they would not starve. The days had passed, but he did not return. Each night his little wife refused to accept that he was gone forever and calmly lit a small candle and placed it prominently in the front window. She prayed by it until dawn. The shadows that plagued her at the corners of the old cabin had fed her fears that he would not return, but the cheerful little blaze continued holding out HOPE! Each morning as her small children woke She prayed over them and told them not to fear that their father would be home soon.

On Christmas Eve there was a light knock at the door. The woodcutter's wife rose to answer it and the door opened suddenly. It was her husband, chilled to the bone, frostbitten fingers and an icy beard. She hustled him inside and sat him near the fire. She pushed a tin cup into his hands and told him to drink. It was the last of the thin broth. It was the only food they had left in the house. Despite his mumbled objections, she made him drink it. Once he had warmed himself, he smiled lovingly at her and told his story. He said that he had found an old man on the road that needed help. Her husband had helped him get home, but when the woodcutter came back along the path he had gotten turned around somehow. "I was truly lost, but I saw the light in the window." His voice was full of emotion.

His wife smiled and replied, "I knew you would."

The next morning was Christmas Day. The blacksmith's son came from the village driving a huge wagon filled with food. He said a stranger had sent him to deliver it. There was a note that came with the gift. "Thank you for helping an old man get home."

Tom sat up straight on the hard bench, straightened his shirt and stood. Lindy had remembered the story and she had remembered the candle. Tom could barely breathe from sniffing. With great care, he moved about the little church. The lights all seemed a bit brighter somehow. Tom slipped on his old heavy work coat, locked up and closed the main door behind him. Outside the light snow crunched softly under his boots. It fell in

little flurries tossed on a whimsical breeze, but the sky in the distance told him the real storm was yet to come.

Tom made it to his truck, opened the door, slipped inside and sat the bible next to him on the seat. Tom turned the key and the truck came to life, ready to take him out into that storm. "Do you think I will be able to see the little light shining in the window, even in the big city?" He asked the darkness not really expecting a reply. Tom felt very warm suddenly, "I know you will." He somehow felt, he heard his wife answer beside

him. Tom smiled and pulled out of the drive and onto the road leading to the main highway toward the big city.

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*A Joyful Noise, Lovingly written down.
Amen.*



I love surprises and I love to share...

When we are little we remember the strangest things. My great grandmother gave me a cookie from a Christmas tin. It was in the shape of a little holiday man (the tin one), we all know and love from the typical set of figures. Studded all along the body were these little silver balls. You know the ones they no longer make for various health reasons. Well it was the best cookie in my whole life ever, to date.

Sadly, I was very little when my great grandmother passed, so I never knew the recipe.

Since then I have spent years trying, changing, experimenting ...

This is the very best so far. I want to share that with you now. I hope your holidays are full of fun and even more surprises. All the blessings of the season to you and yours always.

"Candle Cakes"

(Because we make them in preparations for friends to visit.)

6 cups of flour
1 cup of butter
1 teaspoon of salt
2 cups of sugar
2 tablespoons of baking powder
4 eggs
3/4 cup of milk
2 teaspoons of vanilla flavoring
(you may change the flavoring to lemon or other desired flavor)

Put all ingredients in a giant bowl.

Mix really well. Roll out on counter to 1/4 inch thick.

Cut with desired cookie cutters. (Any shape, average size should be 2" x 3".)

Bake on greased cookie sheets for 8-10 minutes approximately.

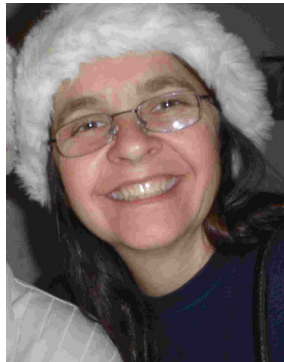
(This varies per oven. The bottom of cookie should be golden brown, while the tops only slightly browned.)

350 degrees. Makes approximately 3 dozens cakes. Let cool and frost as desired. If you don't want to frost, you can drop cookie in powdered sugar or cinnamon and sugar when warm, and it will stick nicely all over.

Just for fun, you can also take the batter and add a little food coloring. This allows for more decorating fun ideas.

It also makes this more personal and allows you to start your own family tradition!

The author:



Just a note to say thank you for your time.

Please email, print and share with family and friends. Have a blessed holiday!

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